

## TRAINING SELF-ADVOCACY SKILLS TO ADULTS WITH MILD HANDICAPS

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We developed and empirically evaluated an instructional program to teach self-advocacy skills to eight young adults with mild handicaps. Participants were taught to discriminate whether or not possible violations of legal rights occurred in socially validated scenarios and, if so, to role-play how to redress rights violations. Experimental control was demonstrated with a multiple probe design across four general legal rights categories for the discrimination component of training, and a multiple probe across groups of subjects for the redressing legal rights component of training. Participants' behavior was probed in simulations and deceptions of legal rights violations in natural settings. There were marked increases in dependent measures after instruction. Difficulties in assessing generalization and maintenance of low-rate behaviors and suggestions for future research are presented.

**DESCRIPTORS:** community survival skills, assertiveness training, group training, independent living skills, rehabilitation clients

Handicapped persons have had a history of segregation and discrimination in our society for more than a century (De Jong, 1983; Wolfensberger, 1972). Traditionally, legal advocacy for persons with handicaps has been undertaken by family members, friends, advocacy committees, nonlegal professionals, and attorneys (Herr, 1983). In recent years, as part of the independent living movement, persons with physical handicaps have begun to assert their legal rights and challenge the stereotyped view that persons with handicaps cannot speak for themselves. Although persons with developmental disabilities and mental retardation have faced a similar history of discrimination and segregation, they have participated minimally in self-advocacy activities, perhaps because many have not acquired the necessary discriminations and verbal skills to advocate on their own behalf in the natural environment.

In recognition of the common needs of all persons with handicaps, the Independent Living Cen-

ters in the United States recommended to the National Council on the Handicapped that the latter "explore the extension of independent living principles to disability groups not currently adequately represented in the independent living movement, including developmentally disabled, mentally retarded, and mentally ill persons" (U.S. Department of Education, 1984).

Despite initial efforts by persons with disabilities to assert their own rights, there is a paucity of research demonstrating effective strategies to teach self-advocacy skills to this group. There is a need for empirically validated instructional programs that teach persons with handicaps their legal rights, as well as what action they can take if their rights are violated. Legal awareness, however, is one of the least common topics in independent living skills training programs (Iceman & Dunlap, 1984).

In response to this need, we developed and evaluated an instructional program to teach adults with mild handicaps (a) to discriminate whether or not their legal rights have been violated in certain interpersonal situations, and (b) a general complaint process to redress rights violations.

### METHOD

#### *Participants*

Four male and four female ambulatory clients of a rehabilitation facility served as participants. All

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were referred for services because they lacked the skills to obtain employment and function independently in the community. They ranged in age from 19 to 27. Participants' WAIS-R Full Scale IQs and additional disabilities cited in their case files were as follows: Trina (average IQ, cerebral palsy, speech impairment), Katie (IQ = 78, mentally retarded), Sue (IQ = 69, learning disabled), Matt (IQ = 77, learning disabled, psychoneurosis, depressed type with secondary diagnosis of personality disorder), Cindy (IQ = 76, character disorder with antisocial features), Rob (IQ = 112, psychoneurosis), Bill (IQ = 83, mentally retarded), and Ken (IQ = 71, mentally retarded). The first eight clients referred to the facility that had not already participated in the pilot study were enrolled in the main study. All eight participants demonstrated a skill deficit in legal knowledge during an independent living assessment given to all new facility clients.

### *Settings*

Discrimination training and testing were conducted in several classrooms at participants' rehabilitation facility. Training and testing of redressing rights violations were conducted in a classroom at the rehabilitation facility (classroom role-play) and a case manager's office at the facility (in vivo). Additionally, role-play training and testing were conducted in three community settings (a living unit in an apartment building for handicapped persons, the recreation room at the apartment building, and a discount department store).

### *Materials*

An overhead projector, screen, transparencies, videocassette recorder, telephone, and a telephone directory provided to all clients of the rehabilitation facility (i.e., a six-page directory of telephone numbers of agencies frequently used by persons with disabilities living in the community) were used during training and testing.

### *Instructional Content*

*Legal rights and conditions.* A list of 30 legal rights and their accompanying conditions (i.e., requirements that must be met for the right to be

exercised) relevant to the target population was generated based on a review of the disability rights literature (e.g., Kerns *et al.*, 1981; Mickenberg & Dickson, 1979). The rights and accompanying conditions were subdivided into four general categories (i.e., personal, community, human services, and consumer rights) as shown in Table 1.

*Scenarios.* For each of the specific rights, scenarios were developed that described hypothetical interpersonal situations in which participants were denied a request. Some scenarios exemplified requests that were justifiably denied (e.g., because the participant failed to meet a condition such as getting a blood test or paying a fee when applying for a marriage license). These were termed non-violation scenarios. Other scenarios, termed violation scenarios, illustrated the denial of participants' requests without justification (i.e., the participant either met all the necessary conditions for a conditional right or it was a right with no conditions).

Two parallel sets of scenarios (100 per set) were developed according to general case programming guidelines (Horner, Sprague, & Wilcox, 1982). The parallel pairs pertained to the same specific right. Parallel scenarios for conditional rights also varied the specific conditions that were or were not met. From each of these parallel pairs of scenarios, one was chosen randomly for training and the other for testing (e.g., testing scenario: "You and your fiance want to get a marriage license. Neither of you like doctors; therefore, you did not get blood tests. You knew you were both in good health anyway. The person behind the counter at the City Clerk's Office refused to give you your marriage license." Training scenario: "You and your boy/girlfriend went to the Courthouse to get a marriage license. You both remembered to get blood tests and also filled out all the forms and answered all the necessary questions. You both spent the last of your money for the bus fare. The person at the counter refused to give you a marriage license.").

*Redressing rights violations.* After a review of literature describing various consumer complaint processes, a three-step sequence to respond to a rights violation was developed. Participants should first assert their rights to the person who directly

violated them (e.g., landlord, sales clerk, case manager); if this person did not resolve the problem, complain to the next higher person in authority (e.g., supervisor); and if the problem remained unresolved, seek the assistance of a community advocacy agency.

The specific response to each of the above personnel included the following components: an assertion of one's rights (e.g., "You have no right to . . ."), an explanation of why one's rights were violated including a statement of conditions that were met (e.g., "I paid the fee, passed the tests, and filled out all the necessary forms"), and when complaining to the supervisor or advocacy agency personnel, a description of what already was done to resolve the problem (e.g., "I talked to the sales clerk and his supervisor, and neither of them would help me"). A checklist for redressing rights violations was developed based on these responses.

### Content Validation

Validation was conducted for (a) specific legal rights and their accompanying conditions for each of the four general rights categories; (b) the sequence of behavior to redress a rights violation; and, (c) the interpersonal situations depicted in the scenarios. The regional director of the Developmental Disabilities Protection and Advocacy Commission (an agency designed to provide information and legal representation to persons with disabilities) and two service providers experienced with the target population served as validators. Validators provided specific feedback orally and in writing regarding these issues for each scenario. The feedback was incorporated in the final draft of the scenarios.

### Procedures for Legal Rights Discrimination

**Baseline.** Baseline consisted of 40- to 50-min individual sessions testing discriminations from all four of the general rights categories. Probes were conducted before and immediately after training each of the four general rights. The trainer read each scenario aloud and then asked, "Is this a violation of your rights?" After a response, she asked either "Why?" or "Why not?" No prompts or corrective feedback were given; however, non-

Table 1  
Specific Rights and Correct Response Criteria for Four General Legal Rights

I. Personal Rights: Rights to which one is entitled as a member of society.	
*A.	Right to marry (4 consecutively correct responses)
*B.	Right to show physical affection to a person of the opposite sex (2 consecutively correct responses)
*C.	Right to use birth control (3 consecutively correct responses)
*D.	Right to have and raise children (3 consecutively correct responses)
*E.	Right to vote (4 consecutively correct responses)
F.	Right to help when voting (2 consecutively correct responses)
*G.	Right to get a driver's license (4 consecutively correct responses)
II. Community Rights: Rights to which one is entitled when living in the community.	
*A.	Right to get a job (2)
B.	Right to minimum wage (2)
C.	Right to proper notice if you are being fired (2)
D.	Right to safe working conditions (2)
E.	Right to equal consideration for promotion and other benefits (2)
*F.	Right to housing (3)
*G.	Right to privacy (3)
H.	Right to repairs if renting (2)
*I.	Right to have visitors of your choice when renting (2)
*J.	Right to use public facilities (2)
III. Human Services Rights: Rights to which one is entitled as a consumer of human services.	
*A.	Right to services (2)
*B.	Right to advance notice of any change in assistance (2)
*C.	Right not to have your records shown to anyone (2)
D.	Right to look at your records (2)
E.	Right to go to staff meetings (2)
F.	Right to refuse to participate in or withdraw from research at any time (2)
G.	Right to quit services at any time (2)
IV. Consumer Rights: Rights to which one is entitled as a buyer of products.	
A.	Right to be told the truth about products (2)
B.	Right to choose what to buy (2)
C.	Right to buy safe products (2)
D.	Right to have action taken on your complaint (2)

\* Conditional rights.

Table 2

## Discrimination Training Procedures for Four General Legal Rights Categories

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1. Definition of first general rights category (i.e., Personal Rights).
  2. Presentation of first specific right (i.e., right to marry).
  3. Presentation of conditions for first specific right (e.g., marriage license, blood test, money to pay the fee, fill out necessary forms).
  4. Presentation of scenarios illustrating violations and non-violations of first specific right.
  5. Presentation of second specific right (Steps 2 to 4 above were repeated until all specific rights in the general rights category were presented).
  6. Within General Rights Category Interspersal—scenarios from all specific rights in the first general rights category were presented in arbitrary order.
  7. Definition of second general rights category (Steps 2 to 6 above were repeated).
  8. Between Rights Category Interspersal—scenarios from specific rights in first and second general rights categories were presented in arbitrary order.
  9. Definition of third general rights category (Steps 2 to 6 above were repeated).
  10. Between Rights Category Interspersal—Step 8 was repeated presenting scenarios from specific rights in first, second, and third general rights categories.
  11. Definition of fourth general rights category (Steps 2 to 6 above were repeated).
  12. Between Rights Category Interspersal—Step 8 was repeated presenting scenarios from specific rights in first, second, third, and fourth general rights categories.
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contingent praise for participation was provided. A scenario was scored as correct only if participants responded accurately to both of the above questions. The percentage of scenarios answered correctly was the principal dependent variable.

**Training.** Participants were taught to discriminate four general categories of legal rights to which they are entitled (i.e., personal, community, human services, and consumer rights), as well as conditions they must meet to obtain certain rights (e.g., having a blood test before getting a marriage license). In addition, participants were taught to discriminate between interpersonal situations in which their rights were and were not violated. Training, conducted in one group of eight participants during 50-min sessions, took place sequentially across the four general categories of legal rights. Training procedures,

summarized in Table 2, involved verbal instructions and textual cues presented by an overhead projector.

After the trainer defined and presented the conditions for the first specific legal right (i.e., Steps 2 and 3 in Table 2), participants took turns stating those conditions after the cues from the overhead transparency were removed. Each participant had an equal number of opportunities to respond across training sessions. Correct responses were praised. If a participant responded incorrectly or failed to respond within 10 s, the trainer stated a condition of the right, then asked the participant to name a condition. After the participant responded correctly, verbal praise was provided.

Before presenting scenarios for discrimination training (i.e., Training Step 4), the trainer described the two types of scenarios (i.e., conditional rights violation and conditional rights nonviolation) that would be presented for the first specific legal right. She also modeled responses to two questions regarding the scenario (i.e., "Is this a violation of your rights?" and either "Why?" or "Why not?"). A third type of scenario (i.e., unconditional rights violation) also was presented during training; however, it was not introduced until after the first unconditional specific right (i.e., right to assistance in voting) was presented.

During Training Steps 4, 6, and 8 (shown in Table 2) the trainer described scenarios and participants took turns responding to the questions. If participants responded correctly to the first question, praise was provided and the next question was presented to the same person. If participants failed to respond within 10 s or responded incorrectly to the first question, the trainer provided a sequence of prompts. First, a nonspecific prompt was provided (e.g., "Look closely at the scenario. Did you meet all the conditions?"). If participants still failed to respond or responded incorrectly, specific verbal instructions were provided (e.g., "You did not meet all the conditions; therefore, it is not a violation of your rights."). If participants continued to respond incorrectly, the trainer verbally modeled the correct response, then asked the first question. After the participant responded correctly, verbal

praise was provided and the second question was presented (i.e., either "Why?" or "Why not?"). Procedures for correcting errors to the second question were the same as for the first question.

As can be seen in Table 2, interspersal training was conducted at Steps 6 and 8. Previously trained scenarios were reintroduced for additional instruction. During Within Rights Category Interspersal training (i.e., Step 6), all scenarios from the general rights category previously instructed were presented again. Participants had to meet a performance criterion for each specific right within that one general category. The required number of consecutively correct scenarios from each legal right is indicated on Table 1 following each right. The criterion was set higher for specific rights with several conditions.

For Between Rights Category Interspersal training (i.e., Steps 8, 10, and 12 in Table 2), scenarios were presented from all previously trained general rights categories. Two scenarios were arbitrarily chosen (one exemplifying a rights violation and one a nonviolation) from each specific right in all general categories previously trained.

At the beginning of each training session, all specific rights initially taught in the preceding session were reviewed. Participants took turns naming those rights until all were stated. The trainer named specific rights participants omitted. In addition, at the end of each session, all new specific rights taught that session were reviewed in the same manner.

*Posttest.* Subsequent to meeting the performance criterion for the final Between Rights Category Interspersal training (Step 12 in Table 2), the legal rights discrimination test given during baseline was readministered. Participants were required to meet a 90% correct performance criterion for each of the four general rights categories on that test. Response-contingent feedback was not provided.

*Remedial training.* If participants fell below the 90% criterion on any general rights category, remedial training was provided. Initially, repeated practice was given only on those specific rights on which errors occurred. A performance criterion was set one response above the criterion shown in Table

1. Subsequently, participants received interspersal training for all specific rights in that general rights category. Remedial training was conducted in the same fashion as previously described.

### *Procedures for Redressing Legal Rights Violations*

After legal rights discrimination training, participants were taught a general sequence of behavior to redress rights violations.

*Baseline.* Baseline consisted of individual sessions testing participants' abilities to redress rights violations. Probes were conducted prior to, immediately after, and 1 and 3 months subsequent to training. Assessments were conducted in a rehabilitation facility classroom and in five community locations (i.e., a discount department store, a living unit at an apartment building for people with handicaps, the recreation room at that apartment building, and a case manager's office at the rehabilitation facility). Testing involved role-played responses to scenarios depicting rights violations.

During classroom role-play assessments, participants were tested individually. The trainer read a scenario aloud, then gave a written copy to the participant to study for 1 min. The trainer told the participant to assume the rights violation actually happened, and then asked, "Would you do anything in response?" If the answer was "Yes," the trainer asked, "What would you do?" When a response included a reference to another person (e.g., "I would talk to the store clerk"), the trainer interrupted and said she would play that role. The participant then was asked to act out what he or she would do. Except when the trainer played the role of a staff member of a community advocacy agency (the final step in the behavioral sequence), she used negative voice tones and facial expressions, and refused to assist the participant. When playing the role of the community advocate, however, the trainer always agreed to help participants. Only noncontingent praise for participation was administered. For a scenario illustrating a violation of legal rights to be scored correctly, participants had to role-play without error all responses on a re-

dressing rights violation checklist. The percentage of scenarios role-played correctly was the dependent variable.

Role-play assessments in community settings were the same as those in the classroom except that a confederate unknown to participants assumed the role of whomever participants had requested (e.g., store clerk who stepped behind the complaint counter at the discount store and said, "Can I help you?"; landlord who knocked at the door of the apartment and informed participants they had to move out by the end of the week). If participants requested to talk to someone from a community advocacy agency while at the store, the telephone call was role-played when they returned to their rehabilitation facility.

During in vivo testing in the case manager's office, the trainer was not present. Instead, participants were temporarily deceived and presented a situation in which their case manager ostensibly violated their rights (i.e., case manager said she had shown client records to a third party without obtaining consent). Because case managers regularly met with clients to discuss their progress and often obtained consent to share information with other agencies, this meeting should not have signaled a data collection session.

Participants had the opportunity to respond to this deception immediately. If participants asserted their rights (e.g., "You had no right to do that without my consent"), the case manager responded with uncooperativeness (e.g., "I feel I did the right thing"). After participants left the case manager's office, she recorded their performance on the redressing rights violations checklist. If participants contacted the Chief Rehabilitation Counselor, she also responded with uncooperativeness (e.g., "I think your case manager did the right thing") and recorded responses on the checklist. Regardless of whether or not participants complained to the Chief Rehabilitation Counselor, at the end of the day all participants were informed that their case manager did not show the records without consent. Participants were asked to state what they should do if this deceptive situation actually happened.

Case managers, the Chief Rehabilitation Coun-

selor, and other confederates were trained to role-play before testing. They were given feedback regarding the accuracy of their verbal responses and their nonverbal behavior (i.e., stern voice tone and negative facial expressions). In addition, the former two personnel practiced scoring responses, and the trainer provided corrective feedback.

*Training.* Written instructions regarding how to redress rights violations were presented on overhead transparencies, and the trainer read them aloud. The first textual cue stated the sequence of persons to whom participants should speak when responding to a rights violation. The second transparency stated the verbal components that should be included in the description of the problem to each of the above personnel. The third transparency presented a checklist of behaviors to redress a rights violation that chained the responses from the first two transparencies. After the trainer removed the third transparency, she asked participants questions regarding how to redress a rights violation. Correct and incorrect responses received the same consequences as during legal rights discrimination training.

Next, a videotape was presented portraying rehabilitation staff role-playing how to redress rights violations for one scenario from each of the four general rights categories. Participants were given the redressing rights violations checklist for each videotaped scenario and were told to mark each response on the checklist as it occurred on the tape. The videotape was stopped at the end of the role-play for each of three parties (i.e., offending individual, that person's supervisor, and a community advocate) and the trainer asked whether all role-played responses were completed correctly.

Following the videotaped role-plays, participants individually engaged in behavioral rehearsal. The trainer chose participants with whom to role-play and presented scenarios and role-played as during testing. Those who were not actively participating observed the role-play while completing the redressing rights violation checklist.

Participants were given specific verbal feedback on errors made during role-play to each of the three parties. Following feedback, participants role-played

the step again. If participants still did not perform correctly, the trainer modeled the correct responses, and participants imitated. During correction, specific verbal praise was provided for steps performed correctly. If corrective feedback was not necessary, praise was withheld until participants completed the entire role-play. The acquisition criterion was correct role-play performance of all responses of the redressing rights violations checklist without assistance for three consecutive scenarios from each of the four general rights categories.

Subsequent to training redressing rights violations for each of the four categories of general rights, a combination of violation and nonviolation scenarios from the four general categories was presented for training. This instruction promoted maintenance of the legal rights discriminations already learned and acquisition of the redressing legal rights role-play. Training procedures were the same as previously described. The acquisition criterion was two consecutive violation scenarios and two consecutive nonviolation scenarios answered correctly from each of the four general rights categories.

*Posttest.* Following training, two tests were administered. The first was conducted as during baseline. Because this test involved only rights violations scenarios, a second test was given to assess whether or not participants had maintained the discriminations between violation and nonviolation scenarios. This latter test consisted of scenarios arbitrarily sampled from those that had not been presented on previous redressing rights violation tests. Participants were required to discriminate whether or not their rights had been violated and, if they had, to emit the behavioral chain to redress a rights violation. Response-contingent feedback was not provided.

*Follow-up.* Follow-up assessments were conducted 1 and 3 months after training. Because legal rights violations are a low-rate stimulus condition in the natural environment, it was expected that participants would not have had the opportunity to practice the target behaviors. Therefore, a limited booster session was conducted before the 1 month follow-up assessment. During this booster session, participants were given brief verbal instructions on

the sequence of persons with whom to speak when redressing a rights violation, as well as the verbal components that should be included in the description of the problem. The booster session did not include a review of legal rights and their conditions. During booster training, participants individually engaged in behavioral rehearsal, as previously described, until they attained the performance criterion used during training.

After 3 months, direct trainer assistance was almost entirely eliminated. Participants were presented a written permanent prompt, a *Legal Rights Handbook*, that contained the four general rights categories, all specific legal rights and accompanying conditions, and the sequence of steps to take to redress a rights violation. The trainer described the major sections of the *Handbook* and informed participants that they could refer to it during testing. The conditions of this follow-up test were intended to simulate natural conditions in which people in our society use written materials as cues when necessary. Permanent prompts such as these frequently are used by persons without disabilities when performing low-frequency behaviors.

The 1- and 3-month follow-up tests were conducted in the classroom, community, and in vivo settings as described previously. During the 1-month in vivo condition, however, participants were presented a different deception (i.e., case managers informed participants they could not attend their next staff meeting). The 3-month in vivo tests, however, were not conducted because most of the participants had completed their rehabilitation programs and had moved into independent living.

### *Experimental Design*

A multiple probe design across the four general rights categories was used to demonstrate experimental control during the discrimination of legal rights component. A multiple probe design across two groups of participants was used during training redressing rights violations.

### *Interobserver Agreement*

A second observer recorded data simultaneously and independently of the trainer on 25% of the

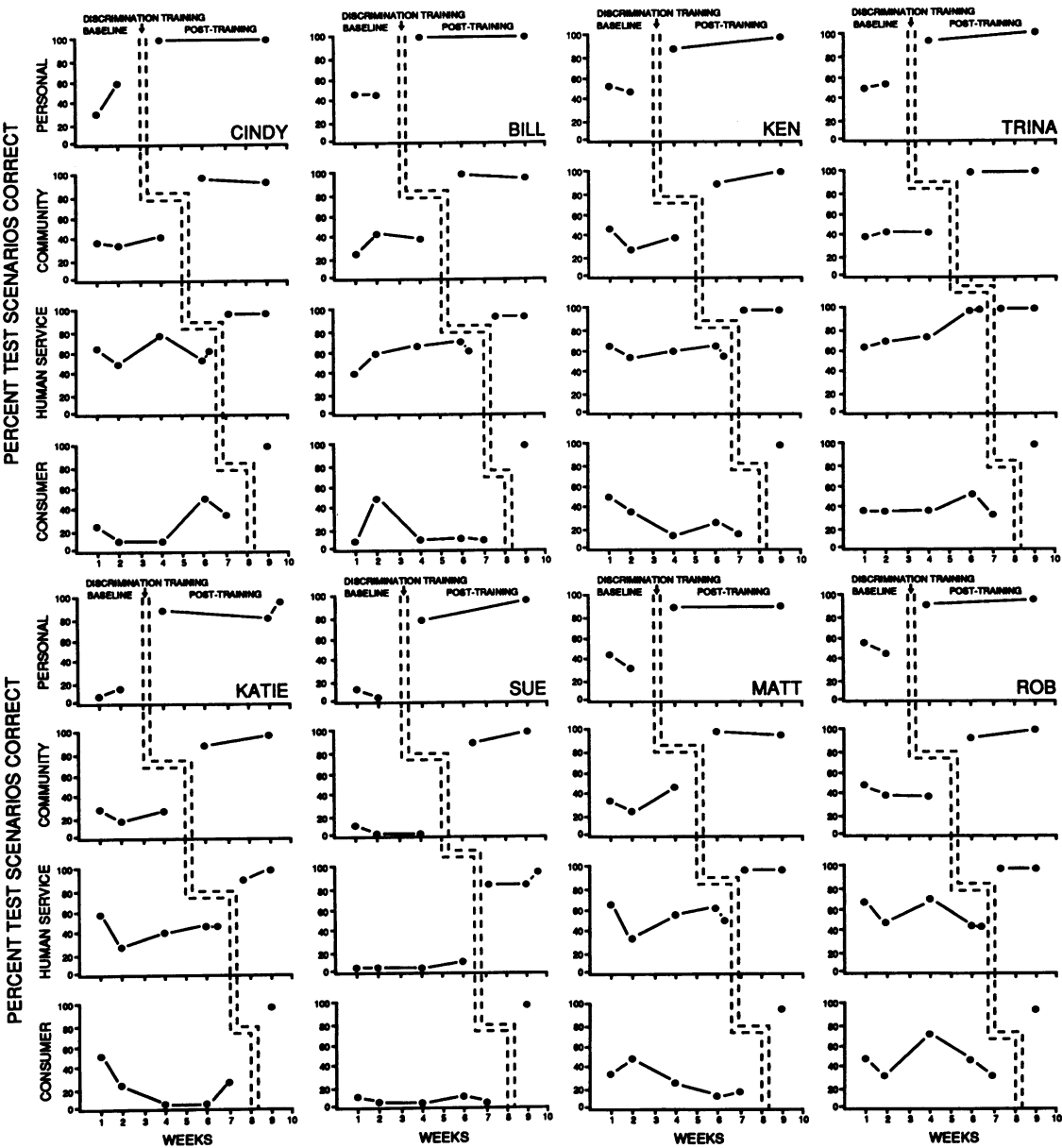


Figure 1. Percentage of correct scenarios on discrimination of legal rights tests during pretraining and posttraining conditions for the four general rights categories.

test probes across all phases of the experiment for all participants. Interobserver agreement was calculated by taking the number of agreements divided by the number of agreements plus disagreements, and multiplying by 100%. Agreements were defined as a scenario in which both observers recorded the participant's response to all discrimi-

nation questions or steps on the redressing rights violation checklist as correct or incorrect. Interobserver agreement scores for testing discrimination of legal rights ranged from 86% to 100% ( $M = 98\%$ ) on the personal rights category, 86% to 100% ( $M = 98\%$ ) on the community rights category, 93% to 100% ( $M = 98\%$ ) on the human services



category, and 75% to 100% ( $M = 97\%$ ) on the consumer rights category. Interobserver agreement for testing redressing rights violations was 100% on each trial.

## RESULTS

### *Discrimination of Legal Rights*

Figure 1 shows the percentage of scenarios discriminated correctly for all four general rights categories for each of the eight participants. In the personal, community, and consumer general rights categories, participants responded correctly, on average, to 32% of the scenarios during baseline (range, 2% to 48%). For human services rights (except for Sue who was near zero across all general rights categories), average performance was 51% (range, 43% to 78%). Although Trina's baseline was at 100% prior to training in the human services category, training was initiated to ensure her response maintenance. A possible explanation for the higher baseline performance in the human services category is that all participants had been long-term recipients of human services and were informed of their rights as clients when they entered the rehabilitation facility.

After training, including remedial instruction if necessary, correct responses averaged 98% (range, 93% to 100%) for each of the four general rights categories. As can be seen in Figure 1, performance increased only after training. Sue required remedial training on the human services rights category and Katie on the personal rights category to reach the 90% criterion.

### *Redressing Rights Violations*

Figure 2 shows the percentage of scenarios to which participants responded correctly. Participants in both groups performed at 0% correct across all testing conditions prior to training. After training, 2 of the 3 participants increased their classroom performance to 100%; 1 participant (Bill) scored 76% correct. All demonstrated generalization on the community role-play test, and 2 (Bill was the exception) to the in vivo test in the case manager's office. In addition, all participants scored 100% on

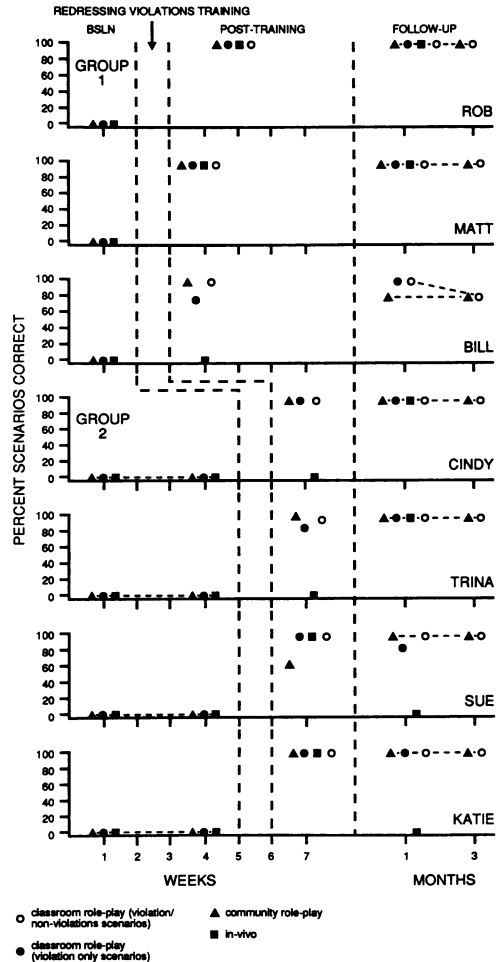


Figure 2. Percentage of correct scenarios on behavioral tests during pretraining, posttraining, and follow-up conditions in the classroom, community, and natural conditions.

the posttraining discrimination assessment with violation and nonviolation scenarios.

Other subjects showed similar increases in performance after training. During the classroom role-play tests involving only rights violation scenarios, 3 of the 4 participants performed at 100% and 1 at 86%. All participants scored 100% when tested on scenarios involving violation and nonviolation scenarios. Three of the 4 participants showed 100% generalization to the community settings; 1 averaged 60%. Under the in vivo test condition, 2 participants demonstrated generalization and 2 did not. All participants performed at 100% on the posttraining discrimination assessment.

Figure 2 shows that 1 month after training, participants in both groups performed at 100% in the classroom role-plays, with the exception of Sue on one occasion (87%). Two of the 3 participants performed at 100% in the community; Bill scored 90%. In addition, 4 participants achieved 100% in the in vivo condition. Bill could not be tested under this condition because he had completed his rehabilitation program. For the 3 month follow-up, all 7 participants performed at 100% for all classroom and community tests.

## DISCUSSION

Our results suggest that adults with mild handicaps can be taught to discriminate hypothetical interpersonal situations in which their legal rights may be violated from those in which they are not violated. Also, participants learned a general complaint process to respond to possible rights violations. Participants learned to discriminate and respond to up to 200 hypothetical interpersonal situations involving 30 specific legal rights in four general categories of rights.

With only one exception, participants demonstrated generalization to four community role-play settings. This result may have been obtained because procedures were incorporated to promote generalization (e.g., training sufficient exemplars, developing and selecting scenarios based on general case programming guidelines, making stimulus conditions during the role-plays closely approximate those in the natural environment). Generalization was not as strong, however, during the community assessment. Assessment of generalization under entirely natural conditions, rather than deception, was not possible.

Several problems were encountered in assessing generalization: (a) rights violations occur at a low rate in the natural environment; (b) it is difficult to simulate the natural stimulus conditions of rights violations; (c) it is difficult to replicate tests in the natural environment of the same situation before and after training because of the ethical obligation to debrief participants after the first test; and (d) deceptions create an ethical dilemma; therefore, it

was difficult to gain cooperation from some community personnel (e.g., public officials or business managers refused to allow role-playing in their setting).

This study trained skill maintenance by including interspersal training procedures. By reintroducing into training previously learned stimuli, discriminations between new and old legal rights were sharpened and their maintenance enhanced. In redressing rights violations, rather than teaching a unique response for each hypothetical situation, participants were taught a general sequence of behavior to respond to a varied and large number of stimulus situations. Furthermore, a stringent acquisition criterion was established during training; therefore, participants had many trials to practice the target skills. Because of the booster session provided during the maintenance phase, conclusions regarding skill maintenance are limited. Nevertheless, results indicate that self-advocacy skills were maintained over 3 months with the use of a permanent prompt (i.e., a handbook).

This study is one of the first attempts to develop and empirically evaluate a training program to teach self-advocacy skills to persons with mild handicaps. Future research should address the difficult challenge of training generalization and maintenance of self-advocacy skills. More specifically, subsequent studies should (a) conduct a more thorough assessment of generalization in a wider variety of settings under more natural conditions; (b) conduct a more long-term unprompted follow-up assessment; (c) evaluate procedures for promoting long-term maintenance of low-rate behaviors; and (d) investigate the parameters of training self-advocacy skills to persons with disabilities (e.g., the level of retardation for which self-advocacy training is feasible).

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